

McConnelsville does NOT need parking meters. This is possibly the most ass-backward archaic policy to which the village clings.

Parking meters might be useful in busy downtown districts where the need for parking spaces exceeds the number of spaces available. That does not describe McConnelsville.

Meters are intended to assure that vehicles are moved often, allowing others to park. Good examples are places like downtown Columbus or Athens, Ohio. There are hundreds of people who have business to conduct in those cities, and there are not enough spaces to accommodate them all. There, meters (coupled with enforcement of two hour limits) will assure that vehicles move often.

In McConnelsville, meters are used as a punitive deterrent to parking in the downtown and a revenue stream.

First of all, there is no shortage of parking. Most days, a trip down the village's main street will reveal that there are more empty parking spaces than vehicles. This is no surprise. Downtown McConnelsville has few retailers. The banks have their own parking lots. The county government buildings have their own parking lots, although in another ass-backward policy, those government lots are reserved for employees – not for taxpayers doing business in county offices.

So, when I need to dash into Morris Hardware for a bag of screws, I must either feed a nickel into the infernal meter or risk a \$2 parking violation. Thus, I will just go to one of the other hardware stores that offer free parking. Or alternatively, I will sometimes park for free on the back streets (because I don't carry change) or I will just block the alley, like most other drivers in McConnelsville do – to avoid feeding the meters.

Then what has this accomplished? It has discouraged me from shopping in the dead zone that was once downtown McConnelsville.

I also argue that the meters are BAD public relations. Visitors to our fair village are inevitably tagged for expired meters. I don't know if this is because they assume the meters are just nostalgic street decorations from a bygone era, or if they become so engrossed in their lunch that they forget they have been parked on Main Street for more than two hours. But, I have personally witnessed scores of irate travelers stomping into the Mayor's Office with their bright yellow "welcome" tickets in hand. What a great way to encourage visitors to our historic village – ambush them with a parking ticket.

When I have asked the village administration about this outdated policy, I have been offered these two rationales: the village needs the revenue from the meters, and if we did not have meters, the employees in the downtown businesses would park in the coveted Main Street spots all day long.

I respond: bull flop.

The revenue generated from the meters continues to diminish because of the aforementioned lack of traffic in the downtown, coupled with the necessity of paying the zealous meter enforcement guy. So, a mathematical analysis WOULD reveal (if you could decipher the village's needlessly arcane accounting of revenues reported in the council's minutes) that a better scenario might be just to enforce two-hour parking – without the meters.

Using either the old tried and true tire chalking, or the more technologically advanced palm “computer,” two hour parking COULD be enforced in those coveted Main Street spots. In fact, the meters fail miserably at keeping the downtown employees from parking all day in front of their places of business. I could readily name half dozen employees who feed the meters all day long in order to park at the door of their businesses. I won't do it, because those people would surely be pissed off at me. But I could.

Finally, removing the meters would be a HUGE step toward making the so-called “historic district” of McConnelsville look better. The village enacted an ordinance many years ago establishing a historic district with specifications for the appearance of building facades, signage and lighting. Most of these are ignored. And why not? The village administration insists on keeping the parking meters which are not historically relevant or accurate. In fact the meters are poorly maintained, with peeling paint and inconsistent appearance. In short, they look terrible.

One final note. Instructions on the meters declare “one hour for a dime, two hours for a quarter.” WTF?